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Security Information

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9 September 1953

Chief, Economic Research

Chief, St/PB

Comments on [REDACTED] Consumer Survey of ORR Intelligence
Production

1. [REDACTED] has made a thorough consumer survey of ORR intelligence production, and several facts emerge clearly, as follows:

a. There seems to be general approval of the type of detailed basic study represented by the RR's and PR's and specifically of the objectives that have been set of clear methodology and full documentation. The survey also confirms the impression that RR's and PR's are considered as basic -- that if ORR does not make them accurate and complete, no one else in the intelligence community is likely to make the corrections and fill the gaps.

b. There seems to be a widespread desire for "abstracts" of long reports to be circulated separately.

c. Various additional types of reports, including quarterly or semi-annual reviews, are suggested, of a more general character than the specific commodity reports.

2. [REDACTED] recommendations, on the basis of this survey, that would immediately affect St/PB's operation are, in brief, as follows:

a. That short abstracts of "principal" reports be issued separately.

b. That the Provisional Report, PR, be discontinued as a publication category.

c. That the designation Working Paper, WP, be changed to Working Draft.

3. The Chief, St/PB, approves of [REDACTED] recommendations except for paragraph 2a, above. If the summary of each report is as comprehensive as it should be, he does not feel that an abstract is necessary. ORR's main contribution in the intelligence community is the production of its basic research program, which is widely disseminated and, apparently, well accepted. ORR should set its own policy in the matter of scope and length of reports and not try to satisfy Tom, Dick, and Harry all at the same time or please the "quick" reader

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who, after all, will not necessarily make the proper use of the report. An adequate summary as a part of the report should satisfy any reader's wishes as well as an abstract. The purpose of the report in relation to its basic research program is what CRR should keep in mind. Furthermore, the Chief, St/PB, would like to pose other objections to the abstract, as follows: (a) the preparation of abstracts will almost double the amount of time necessary for editing and add greatly to the cost of publication, (b) some abstracts of even excellent reports will not satisfy the consumer who is looking for regional estimates any more than the long report now satisfies him, (c) some "principal" reports, by their very nature, will almost defy the preparation of an abstract, and (d) abstracts will not necessarily circulate any faster than complete reports.

4. If the Ch/E decides that abstracts should be made of "principal" reports, it is assumed that only about one-fourth of the reports in the RR category would be affected. It is also assumed that all IM's and most of the IP's and MP's and EIC papers would continue to be issued in only one format as at present. And what of Working Drafts? The abstracts apparently would not be much longer than our present summaries except that they would include a tabulation of basic information plus possibly some graphics. But even this expansion would involve much more work than may appear at first consideration. St/PB has always been aware of the needs of the general reader and has consistently attempted to rewrite the summaries completely for general-reader use insofar as the analysts will agree. It should be noted, however, that separate all-purpose abstracts are bound to be less satisfactory than special-purpose summaries, and it should be stressed that an all-purpose abstract circulated by CIA must represent the full report much more faithfully than a special-purpose summary made for limited circulation in some office, and hence it may not have so much "impact." In this connection, it is suggested that demands for estimates with fewer qualifications and more policy implications should be treated with reserve, since there should be at least one research organization in the intelligence community that is not obliged to support the prepared positions of an operating agency. All of these points, however, are incidental: they merely indicate that abstracts might not in all cases meet expectations. The only important point, as far as processing reports is concerned, is that any tendency to rush abstracts into print before the reports themselves have been edited should be repressed, since, as mentioned above, the abstract should faithfully reflect the edited report. Very seldom is a report reviewed and edited by St/PB without extensive changes in all particulars up to the last moment, even to the extent of updating vital information.

5. If the Ch/E decides in the future to meet the requests for various additional types of reports of a more general character than the specific commodity reports, the experience of St/PB indicates that such reports should be laid on, as in the past, only to meet important specific requests, as by the NSC or the ONE, since the

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multiplication of such reports tends to postpone the completion of the very type of basic research required as background and since the one universally accepted function of ORR is basic research. From a publications point of view, however, these additional reports are feasible if put together by the Chief, D/A, together with his Capabilities Branch, which to date has constituted one of the few groups in ORR capable of doing a rapid job that would not be obviously discreditable to CIA and useless to the intelligence community. If other divisions of ORR were to attempt studies of this sort, we should be almost certain to run into major problems -- if not against a stone wall.

6. In addition to the points made above, there are other points that should be made in connection with specific parts of [REDACTED] survey, and they will be made by specific references, as follows:

a. II. 2. b (p. 2). The argument here crosses very definitely into the NIE area.

b. II. 2. c (p. 2). In most reports there is bound to be a type of cataloguing or of "naked statement of isolated facts." Little more will ever be forthcoming from many of the analysts who submit reports. What is meant by evaluation here? "Interrelations between economic sectors" and "relating economic activity to economic policy" -- these are above and beyond the capabilities of most of the analysts, with the possible exception of some in D/A and a few isolated examples in other divisions.

c. II. 2. d (p. 2). The incorporation of "unnecessary, elementary material" in reports is a matter of judgment and perspective and will always remain relative. In the drafts of reports submitted to St/PB for editing and publication, there has certainly been, in most instances, "unnecessary, elementary material." An examination of the finished product, however, will disclose that in those reports which have been edited to the satisfaction of the Chief, St/PB, this extraneous matter has been deleted by competent editors. The reports most guilty of including extraneous matter are the Working Papers and other issues published without benefit of proper editing.

d. II. 3. b (p. 4). Let us hope that any yielding to this request will not result in more office-wide projects which will steal more time from the basic research program.

e. III. 1 (p. 5). Even though "longer research reports" "need not be printed and distributed in large numbers," the reports will still require as much time for editing thoroughly as now.

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f. III. 3 (p. 6). Will this be a D/A responsibility? If we ever have such reports, will they be edited thoroughly or "best-processed" like NIE contributions?

g. III. 4 (p. 6). Will this also be a D/A responsibility? It will not be easy to milk regional copy from a functional copy.

7. Not any of these remarks are intended to reflect adversely on the thoroughness of [REDACTED] excellent survey. They are intended only to provoke and suggest and to help us arrive at correct and workable conclusions. Whatever we do in adjusting the production of our research program to meet the requirements of diverse and many-faceted consumers, let us decide what we want to do or should do and can do and not forget the implications of Aesop's fable of the man, the boy, and the ass.

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